

BOOK REVIEWS

COMPANION TO NEONATAL MEDICINE. By VG Daniels and CL-H Huang. (Pp 240. Illustrated. £8.95). Lancaster: MTP Press, 1982.

"The more acute the experience the less articulate its expression." Harold Pinter.

"Experience dulls the edges of all our dogmas." Gilbert Murray.

THIS short book is one of a series of three volumes summarizing the principles of obstetrics, gynaecology and neonatal medicine. It is essentially a book of lists written by two doctors: "a medical adviser to a major pharmaceutical company," and "a physiological laboratory worker" respectively. The authors and their colleagues are said to have conceived this book during their 'shop-floor' experience whilst they were medical students and house officers.

Before reading the book I wondered about the concept of two non-experts writing a book on neonatal care. Perhaps as tyros they would be able to see the wood behind the trees created by 'neonatal paediatricians.' Alas no, this book which is directed primarily at undergraduate students and senior nurses fails because it lacks the balance which comes with experience. Thus in chapter two, The Delivery Room, resuscitation of the newborn is described without mentioning the Apgar score. In contrast inborn errors of metabolism are covered in the full five pages of chapter 11 on Metabolic Problems. The text is broken up by numerous lists which makes the book very difficult to read. I shall continue to advise medical students and midwives who wish to read a short introductory text of newborn care to opt for "The Newborn Child" by DG Vulliamy.

HLH

THE DYING PATIENT. THE MEDICAL MANAGEMENT OF INCURABLE AND TERMINAL ILLNESS. Edited by Eric Wilkes. (Pp xii + 336. £18.50). Lancaster: MTP Press, 1982.

KNOWLEDGE and interest in terminal care has developed greatly in the last decade. This book, edited by the Professor of General Practice at Sheffield University, is a collection of papers on various aspects of the care of patients with fatal illness. Some of the chapters discuss particular conditions, including not only malignant disease, but cardiac and renal failure and dementia. The control of pain and other symptoms is well discussed and there are chapters on psychological aspects of dying and on 'the therapeutic uses of truth.' The discussions are informed and to the point, and myths are exposed—particularly the surely by now well-known uselessness of the Brompton cocktail and the 'wholly fallacious but heavily promoted' five stage model of the response of patients on learning that they have terminal disease. The last two chapters describe the St. Thomas' Hospital Terminal Care Support Team and the St. Luke's Hospice in Sheffield. The authors of both chapters recommend the Support Team as the model for the future.

This is a valuable handbook of terminal care containing material of use to every doctor. The harrowing tales in the ten bereavement interviews in the appendix of the book suggest that the medical profession is still poorly educated in the care of the dying patient.

RWS

PROBLEMS IN PAEDIATRICS. By John Hood. (Pp 178. £7.95). Lancaster: MTP Press, 1982.

IN the preface to this book the author states that it has been written with general practitioners in mind. The aim has been to provide guidelines to the recognition and management of the more commonplace conditions and as such some aspects "have been dealt with in detail . . . while others are omitted on grounds of probable rare encounter."

Unfortunately, the author has not adhered to his stated intention and as a result the book is very unbalanced in its content and often lacking in sound practical advice. For example brief descriptions are included of Fanconi's syndrome, nephrogenic diabetes insipidus and the Peutz-Jeghers syndrome (misspelt)—conditions which can hardly be described as commonplace. Nor does it seem necessary in this type of publication to include a summary of the surgical procedures to be undertaken in treating transposition of the great vessels with mention of Rashkind atrial septostomy, Mustard's procedure,